Changes in Institutional New Program Approval Process

Campus consultation visits are an important part of the academic program approval and review processes approved by the council in 1999. In addition to setting productivity standards and streamlining online review approval processes for new programs, the council required assessment of each institution's policies for approving new academic programs. In spring 2002, the council staff visited each university and the KCTCS to review campus policies and procedures. Specifically, staff looked for: (1) a rigorous process to determine the need for the program; (2) consultations with employers and other relevant outside groups in program design; (3) collaborative efforts, including articulation agreements with similar programs at other postsecondary institutions; and (4) sound methods for evaluating student learning and program success.

In addition to reviewing formal documentation of policies, the council staff conducted a process audit using two recently approved programs at each institution. The review revealed that program approval practices across the campuses varied in the amount of attention given to needs assessment, external consultation, collaboration, student success measures, and program success criteria. The council staff communicated its findings to the institutions and asked the institutions to respond to staff recommendations. A detailed report of the campus consultation visits and council staff findings were presented to the council July 22, 2002. This current report summarizes the institutions' December 2002 responses to staff recommendations. In all cases, institutions made improvements in specific areas based on staff recommendations. Examples of those changes follow. It should be noted that the review found many good procedures already in place. The University of Louisville, for example, requires new programs to clearly identify goals and measures for student learning and success. The KCTCS does an exemplary job of linking new programs to the needs of employers.

Recommendation 1: Each institution should standardize its needs assessment process to ensure that programs link to economic and community needs.

Response: Eastern Kentucky University, one institution responding specifically to this recommendation, incorporated requirements for a needs analysis in its revised *Guidelines on Curriculum Policies and Procedures for Academic Affairs*. Morehead State University and Kentucky State University added

language to their program approval policies, tying needs assessment to the council's key indicators and five questions. MoSU provided examples in its policy manuals of appropriate needs assessments that include primary and secondary data from employers and other external groups to guide those developing proposals. In its recently revised process, Northern Kentucky University requires that a marketing plan targeting potential students be developed for each new program to ensure adequate enrollment and degree productivity.

Recommendation 2: The process for developing new programs should require consultation about curriculum with groups expected to supply students (high schools and the KCTCS) and those offering additional education and employment to graduates.

Response: EKU's revised policy states that "evidence of collaboration and consultation in the design of the program with expected employers and those who will supply students to the program must be provided." The University of Kentucky implemented a new requirement for evidence that prospective employers and feeder programs were consulted in its design. The KCTCS is implementing new requirements to link development of its programs to four-year degree programs at the universities.

Recommendation 3: Institutions should strengthen requirements for collaboration with other institutions to improve access, efficiency, and quality for both new and existing programs. Articulation agreements should be developed as part of the original design of the program.

Response: In its "checklist" for new academic programs, Murray State University now states that each program proposal must include evidence of consultation with related programs within the university, with other institutions in the state, and with the KCTCS. UK's new program form requires evidence of consultation and collaborative agreements with other state institutions or evidence that these agreements were sought and explanations for why collaborative agreements were not feasible.

In addition to the changes implemented by the institutions to foster collaboration, the campus consultation visits led to changes in the council's own program approval process. Specifically, a required pre-posting for each proposed program was added to the online program approval process. The review showed that programs are often not formally posted online for approval until late in the development process. Pre-posting a program upon initial approval at the department level will allow more time for institutions to share information and create collaborative arrangements.

Recommendation 4: Each institution should ensure that new programs have measures of student learning and student success standards in place prior to beginning the program.

Response: KSU and UK added requirements addressing criteria for student learning and success that developing programs must answer. MuSU now requires that criteria for measuring student success in the program be clearly defined, including SACS-mandated assessment of student learning, completion rates, employment rates, and professional exams.

Recommendation 5: Each institution should include criteria for assessing program success within a specified time.

Response: EKU now explicitly includes CPE program productivity requirements in its program success standards and requires projections showing how these standards will be met. Western Kentucky University noted plans to include more explicit reference to quantitative outcome criteria in new program development procedural guidelines.

To summarize, each institution responded positively to specific staff recommendations for changes in its new program approval processes. These changes should help ensure that new programs are aligned with state needs and are productive in the long term.

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